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Chairman: Mr. CISSÉ (Senegal)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

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(d) COMPREHENSIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF AND FOLLOW-UP TO THE VIENNA DECLARATION AND PROGRAMME OF ACTION (continued) (A/C.3/49/5, A/C.3/49/8, A/C.3/49/10)

1. Mr. MARUYAMA (Japan) said that the Japanese delegation was glad that the World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna in 1993, had resulted in the establishment of the post of High Commissioner for Human Rights and, in the same spirit, it welcomed the efforts made by the Chairman of the Working Group of the Third Committee to ensure that the Group fulfilled its second mandate, namely to adapt the United Nations human rights machinery to the current and future needs in the promotion and protection of human rights, in particular by improving the coordination of its work and its effectiveness.

2. The Japanese delegation had listened with keen interest to the very comprehensive statement made recently by the High Commissioner and highly appreciated his efforts to discharge his mandate. It particularly commended the High Commissioner for visiting Rwanda as soon as he had become aware of the crisis there, for it was because of his quick action in particular that some 60 field officers had been swiftly dispatched to monitor the human rights situation in Rwanda. The deployment of those staff members could help to solve the problem of Rwanda and thereby stabilize the situation in the region, for violations of human rights and humanitarian law in Rwanda were one of the main reasons for the outpouring of refugees to neighbouring countries and one of the principal obstacles to any voluntary repatriation programme. The Japanese delegation assured the High Commissioner of its full support and looked forward to the report which he would make once the operation was completed, as the

experience gained in Rwanda could help the international community to cope with similar situations in the future.

3. The responsibility for ensuring that the right to development was respected rested with Governments, and therefore international cooperation in the exercise of that right should only support the efforts made by Governments. The Japanese delegation was following the deliberations of the Working Group on the issue very carefully. Furthermore, if the High Commissioner was to be able to pursue his activities, the international community must provide him with all the funding and personnel which he needed. The Government of Japan would continue to provide all possible support to the High Commissioner in his work.

4. Japan attached special importance to the coordination of United Nations human rights activities since it was increasingly apparent that such coordination was essential to their efficiency, as demonstrated by the establishment of the human rights protection component of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) and the Commission of Experts on the situation in Rwanda established by Security Council resolution 935 (1994). The organs of the United Nations system must intensify their efforts and increase their cooperation in order to ensure the success of human rights activities.

5. According to the Charter of the United Nations and the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, every Member State had the obligation not only to protect and promote the human rights of its citizens but also to concern itself about the grave violations of human rights in other countries. Therefore, the intervention of a State in the affairs of another State in respect of human rights should not be regarded as interference in the domestic affairs of that State. Japan would continue to follow closely the situation of human rights in particular in Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Cuba, Sudan, Rwanda, Myanmar and the former Yugoslavia and it would acknowledge any progress which those countries were able to make.

6. Japan was firmly convinced that the use of special rapporteurs or independent experts was the best means of verifying allegations of human rights violations in a country. However, the examination of such human rights situations must not be used for political purposes since that did not contribute to remedying the situation. What was most important when resolutions were adopted on a given human rights situation was, firstly, that they should accurately reflect the situation and, secondly, that they should acknowledge the efforts made by the Government concerned to improve the situation and thereby encourage it to further efforts.

7. Japan appreciated the role played by the High Commissioner and the Centre for Human Rights in providing advisory services and technical and financial assistance at the request of Governments and the role played by regional human rights machinery in supporting human rights activities and programmes. It was particularly glad that many countries had already created national institutions for the protection and promotion of human rights, often with the support of the technical assistance programme of the Centre for Human Rights. It pledged its

continued support for the activities of the High Commissioner and the Centre for Human Rights.

8. The Japanese Government remained fully committed to the defence of human rights. It was for that reason that it had adopted in 1992 a charter on official development assistance which stated inter alia that, when envisaging providing assistance to a country, Japan must take care to establish whether the Government of that country was promoting democracy and respect for the fundamental rights of its nationals.

9. Japan paid a tribute to the United Nations, and especially to the Centre for Human Rights, for their human rights work and commended the many non-governmental organizations working for the protection of human rights for their dedication and resolve. It reaffirmed its full support for the United Nations and ensured all other Member States that it was fully prepared to cooperate with them in the defence of fundamental rights and freedoms throughout the world.

10. Mr. MARRERO (United States), referring to agenda item 100 (c), said that it was the obligation of every State Member of the United Nations to enable its nationals to exercise their fundamental rights and that nothing justified a failure to do so since such rights were universal and inalienable. Furthermore, the exercise of such rights was not possible in the absence of political freedom, and their protection required States to adopt democratic practices, practices which must inevitably bring benefits since people who were free to think, exchange ideas and invest their own energies and capital would be able to contribute more to economic and social development than people stunted by repression.

11. The current situation justified some optimism in that regard. In Africa 26 countries had held multiparty elections since 1989, and 12 others would do so within the next two years. In the States of the Community of Independent States and in Central Europe the transition to open political and economic systems had been difficult but was now irreversible. In Latin America, now that democracy had been restored in Haiti, only one country was not yet free. And South Africa, which had long been the bastion of a repressive minority, was now dedicated to the protection of minority rights, freedom of expression and respect for the individual. In Cambodia the new National Assembly was functioning normally and the Government was cooperating with those seeking to monitor the human rights situation. In Haiti the reign of terror was over: the elected representatives of the Haitian people had been restored to power, democratic institutions were beginning to function, and President Aristide had established a tone of reconciliation which was helping to restrain political violence. The United States Government was aware that the United Nations deserved much of the credit for that progress but would like it to do even more to promote democracy; that was why the United States delegation had submitted a draft resolution on the issue.

12. Some Governments continued to suggest that concern for the situation of human rights in their country was illegitimate, interventionist or a political

ploy. Their protests might be cause for concern if they were more credible; however, it was clear that their only purpose was to maintain themselves in positions of power and privilege.

13. In Iraq, Saddam Hussein was attempting to attribute blame for the sanctions imposed on his country to the United Nations and the United States. However, he alone was responsible. Government-sponsored murder and torture were becoming more frequent and brutal. Food and medicine meant for Iraqi civilians were stolen by the regime. Relief shipments to the North had been blocked. In the South, 90 per cent of the marshes had been destroyed and 80 per cent of the region's 250,000 inhabitants had been killed or forced into exile. With regard to that region in particular, his delegation emphatically denied the recent charges by the Iraqi delegation that a United States firm had participated in plans to dry up the marshes, drive out the inhabitants and build roads for military purposes; his delegation took the opportunity to convey to the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iraq the assurances of its esteem. Iraq knew what it must do to re-enter the community of civilized nations; Security Council resolution 688 (1991) had provided it with clear indications of that, but it refused to comply. For that reason, his Government continued to support the formation of an international commission to study war crimes, crimes against humanity and possible acts of genocide committed by the Iraqi Government.

14. In Iran, the regime continued to violate human rights systematically and massively. Torture, summary executions, arbitrary detention and violations of civil liberties and religious freedom occurred frequently. The United Nations Special Representative had not been allowed by the Government to return to Iran and the recommendations which the Special Representative had made during his visits in 1990 and 1991 had not been implemented.

15. The United States of America continued to be concerned at violations of human rights in Cuba. The Cuban people were denied the freedoms of association and speech; many of them were detained without cause, and others were behind bars for holding views inimical to the Government. In July, 40 Cubans fleeing their country aboard the tugboat Trece de Marzo had died when their boat had been rammed deliberately by Government vessels. His Government had called for an investigation of that tragedy. Moreover, while the High Commissioner for Human Rights had been allowed to visit Cuba at the beginning of November, the Cuban Government had continued to deny entry to the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights. The time had come for genuine economic and political reforms in Cuba.

16. In Sudan, where the situation of human rights was among the worst in the world, international condemnations and recommendations had had no discernible effect. Torture was continuing, political opponents were still being executed and displaced persons were still subjected to forced relocation to Government-chosen areas. While the civil war in southern Sudan could explain some of those abuses, as none of the factions had any respect for the fundamental rights of the Sudanese people, it was not an excuse. Accordingly, his delegation

reaffirmed its full support and esteem for the Special Rapporteur and the reports which he had prepared.

17. The question of human rights in China was the subject of a continuing dialogue between the Chinese Government and his Government. His country welcomed China's recent release of eight prisoners of conscience and was encouraged by China's willingness to grant entry to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on religious intolerance, to hold further talks with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and to discuss human rights questions with other States Members of the United Nations. The United States urged China to take further steps to improve the human rights situation in its territory by observing international norms, preserving Tibet's unique cultural, linguistic and religious heritage and releasing persons jailed solely for expressing political beliefs.

18. In Myanmar there was a pervasive atmosphere of fear. Political opponents were prosecuted, civil liberties were severely restricted, the Government continued to have broad recourse to forced labour, and the military continued to act with extreme brutality. Recently, the Government of Myanmar had shown good will by allowing the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to supervise the repatriation of refugees from Bangladesh. His Government encouraged Myanmar to release political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi, winner of the Nobel Prize, to allow ICRC to visit prisoners and to carry out more open and humane policies.

19. In Bosnia, the Government of an internationally recognized multi-ethnic State remained under attack from Serbian separatists. While the Bosnians had committed human rights violations, they were minor in comparison with those committed by the Serbs and the Bosnian Serbs with the aim of expelling the non-Serb populations of the territories under their control: acts of genocide, torture, indiscriminate bombing, fire, rape, castration, etc.

20. In Rwanda, the new Government was struggling to rebuild a society torn apart by one of the most brutal conflicts of recent times. From April until early summer, extremist Hutu militiamen had conducted a ruthless campaign of murder, torture and terror against the Tutsi minority and non-collaborating Hutus. Hundreds of thousands of men, women and children had been bludgeoned or shot to death. Throughout that period, the Government radio station had continually incited genocide and spread terror. Hutu extremists were now in refugee camps in countries adjacent to Rwanda, where they were still terrorizing their Tutsi compatriots and pilfering relief supplies. The new Government advocated national reconciliation and had pledged to cooperate with international human rights organizations. United Nations monitors had been deployed in the country. While the reports that refugees returning to Rwanda had been massacred by forces sympathetic to the Government must be taken seriously, there was no evidence to date that officials of the new Government had been involved in such crimes.

21. The United States Government strongly supported the United Nations decision to establish war crimes tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda

because it believed that the judgements which would be rendered by those tribunals might deter crime and would promote national reconciliation. Moreover, his Government attached great importance to the work of the special rapporteurs of the Commission on Human Rights, and believed that, in most cases, the rapporteurs were very effective in the performance of their mandates. For that reason, his Government would continue to protect and strengthen the ability of the rapporteurs to do their work, and would do everything in its power to resist efforts to weaken or destroy the system of rapporteurs.

22. Twice in the twentieth century, nationalist excess and the hatreds which inspired it had unleashed a global war. Peace and human rights were now threatened by intolerance and ethnic violence. The conflicts which were tearing the world apart were not between the East and the West, the North and the South or the right and the left, but between those ensnared by the hatreds of the past and those striving to build the future. His Government, which was concerned with ensuring a future for the generations to come, called upon all Member States to observe the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, to implement the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to respect the dignity of their citizens.

23. Mr. PORTALES (Chile) noted that, in accordance with the provisions of the Vienna Programme of Action concerning the need to improve the coordination and effectiveness of United Nations human rights machinery and in view of the interest shown by the international community in that question, the United Nations included it in the mandate of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and had established an open-ended working group to that end. Only in so far as it proved to be effective could that machinery truly contribute to the progressive improvement of respect for human rights throughout the world. Moreover, its contribution in that field would be all the more significant because the United Nations would have closer links with States and world public opinion. To that end, his delegation proposed four courses of action. First, it would be very useful if each committee responsible for ensuring the implementation of an international human rights instrument, in cooperation with the Centre for Human Rights and the necessary experts, issued a document specifying, on the one hand, those legislative norms which were contrary to the provisions of the instrument in question and, on the other hand, those which were most conducive to its implementation at the national level. Civil and political rights best lent themselves to such an undertaking, as economic, social and cultural rights were, first and foremost, the result of specific socio-economic policies and international economic factors. Second, there would have to be wider dissemination of publications on the procedures for submitting communications to the different United Nations human rights bodies such as working groups, committees and special rapporteurs, for there was an enormous gap between the number of cases which could potentially be submitted to them and what they actually received. In that connection, the effectiveness of the confidential procedure established by resolution 1503 (XLVIII) of the Economic and Social Council should be reviewed, for it no longer fulfilled the expectations of those who had recourse to it. Noting that neither the reports of the special rapporteurs and working groups nor the resolutions of the Commission on Human Rights and the General Assembly were disseminated as widely

as they should be, he proposed, as a third course of action, that they should be summarized in two- or three-pages in a single document. The resolutions of the Commission on Human Rights and the General Assembly could be published as leaflets on specific human rights themes. Stressing that the numerous United Nations events such as human rights years and decades seemed to have no impact on world public opinion, he said that it was necessary, as a fourth measure, to see whether that was due to saturation or to inefficiency.

24. Of course, all action taken to improve relations between the United Nations and world public opinion in the field of human rights should exploit the many opportunities offered by national and international human rights organizations, both governmental and non-governmental and the mass media. In that connection, the report of the Secretary-General on the development of public information activities in the field of human rights, including the World Public Information Campaign for Human Rights (A/49/582), was encouraging. It led one to conclude that, while the means of communication already existed, the content of the message to be disseminated could be improved.

25. Mr. SOTIROV (Bulgaria) expressed regret that, as the number of international human rights instruments increased, flagrant human rights violations continued to occur in the world. It was not sufficient for countries merely to accede to existing instruments; they must implement them. The international community, for its part, had a duty to intervene in order to check such violations of existing standards. In that connection, the effective control of the implementation of human rights was of capital importance. In no way did it constitute interference in the internal affairs of States. His delegation hoped that those countries which still refused to cooperate with United Nations monitoring mechanisms - in particular, those established under the Commission on Human Rights - would reconsider their position in order to enable the Commission to fulfil its mandate.

26. The ninth periodic report on the situation of human rights in the former Yugoslavia (A/49/641) painted a detailed picture of the current human rights situation in Kosovo, Vojvodina and Sandjak but the Special Rapporteur should also focus attention on other areas, in particular those with a large Bulgarian minority. Document A/49/455, submitted by Bulgaria, provided ample evidence that, contrary to what the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia stated in document A/C.3/49/10, that minority was denied certain rights such as the right to use its own language in the field of education, to have its own culture, to profess and practise its religion in its mother tongue and enjoy freedom of expression and freedom of association. Bulgaria could not but deplore the fact that its unceasing efforts during bilateral contacts with Yugoslav authorities at the highest level in order to resolve the problems of the Bulgarian minority in a constructive manner had thus far been in vain. It also regretted that a humanitarian delivery for the population of Bosilegrad had been intercepted by Serbian authorities on 11 October 1994 on the pretext that it contained books in Bulgarian. The profound concern of the Bulgarian delegation for the situation of the Bulgarian minority in Yugoslavia was purely humanitarian and not dictated by its own interests or by circumstances. It hoped that the facts which it had reported would be reflected in the next report of the Special Rapporteur. For

its part, it was keeping the international community informed of developments in the situation. In conclusion, it was willing to consider in good faith and in a spirit of good-neighbourliness and cooperation any positive proposals put forward, in particular by the authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, aimed at resolving the acute problems of the Bulgarian minority in that country.

27. Mr. KA (Senegal) noted that his country, a constitutional State, was already a party to most international human rights instruments and had adapted its national legislation accordingly. He hailed the efforts of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to make Member States aware that universal ratification of the international human rights instruments was vital to the protection and promotion of those rights. In his view, United Nations activities in that field must be revitalized by strengthening the Treaty Section, in particular through the reclassification of the post of its chief.

28. Out of the same concern for effectiveness, his delegation advocated the establishment of a coordination service between the Centre for Human Rights and non-governmental organizations working for the universal ratification of international instruments. In that connection, it supported the recommendations contained in the report on the fifth meeting of persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies (A/49/537), held at Geneva in May 1994. The report contained, in particular, a proposal that those bodies should consider changing their working methods or amending their rules of procedure in order to allow non-governmental organizations to participate more fully in their activities.

29. Concerning the right to development, he referred to the Vienna Declaration and to the Programme of Action adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development, which reaffirmed that the right to development was universal and inalienable and was an integral part of fundamental human rights. In that connection, he stressed that the lack of development could not be invoked to justify the abridgement of human rights and that the right to development should be fulfilled so as to meet equitably the needs of present and future generations. He noted that the Secretary-General of the United Nations had stated in his report on the work of the Organization (A/49/1) that the United Nations should seek, above all, to give specific content to the right to development, to define better and ensure greater respect for economic, social and cultural rights and to improve the human condition in general. In the knowledge that sustained economic growth and sustainable development were decisive for the integral realization of human rights, the United Nations should urgently focus on establishing a mechanism to ensure the balanced promotion of civil and political rights, on the one hand, and of economic, social and cultural rights on the other. More effective implementation of economic and social rights would thus reduce obstacles to the realization of the universal right to development and would establish conditions conducive to collective and individual security.

30. Senegal was therefore following with interest the activities of the Working Group on the Right to Development, which, in its view, should be given the financial and logistical assistance it needed to discharge more effectively its mandate to identify obstacles to the implementation of the Declaration on the

Right to Development. Additional resources must be allocated to the Centre for Human Rights for that purpose.

31. In the spirit of the Vienna Declaration and Plan of Action, which stressed the need to enhance inter-agency coordination, the General Assembly had created the post of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. What was now required was greater cooperation between the treaty bodies, the specialized agencies and the High Commissioner, in particular between the latter and the Centre for Human Rights, with due regard for their specific mandates. It was essential to provide those two mechanisms with substantial resources to enable them to cope with the numerous tasks which faced them, particularly in the context of the Vienna Declaration and Plan of Action.

32. As to capital punishment, the Senegalese Penal Code made provision for it in certain cases (premeditated crimes, poisoning, barbarous acts, the taking of hostages, espionage and treason); execution was by firing squad in secret. Since Senegal's attainment of independence in 1960, the death penalty had been applied only twice; it was retained as a deterrent and to maintain social order. The relevant legislation would be reviewed once a national consensus had been achieved on the issue. Pending the outcome of the national debate on the advisability of abolishing capital punishment, Senegal had decided to abstain in the vote on the issue.

33. In conclusion, his delegation wished to emphasize the interdependence of human rights, democracy and sustainable development, which were essential elements of the international peace and security that the United Nations had been seeking to achieve for 50 years.

34. Mr. LINDGREN (Brazil) paid a tribute to the High Commissioner for Human Rights, whose report to the General Assembly (A/49/36) he had read with interest. The wide range of activities undertaken by the High Commissioner showed not only the dedication with which he was discharging his duties, but also the wisdom of the mandate set out in General Assembly resolution 48/141. A mechanism resulting from what had originally been a highly controversial decision had thus proved to be constructive and useful to the international community and to Governments in particular.

35. By addressing the question of the implementation of the right to development at the first meeting of the Administrative Committee on Coordination following the World Conference on Human Rights, by ensuring the involvement of the Bretton Woods institutions in his efforts in that connection, and by giving the right to development the highest priority, the High Commissioner for Human Rights had shown his firm grasp of one of the fundamental achievements of the World Conference: the universal acknowledgement of the right to development, in its individual and collective dimensions, as a fundamental right. The international community had finally acknowledged, without justifying violations of any kind under any pretext, that the right to development was the right which enabled all other rights to be respected.

36. His delegation appreciated the activities of the High Commissioner in other areas, in particular with regard to events in Rwanda, Burundi and Malawi. Those activities illustrated the role that could be played by the High Commissioner in emergencies, in preventive action and in situations of transition to democracy, thereby proving that the existing system could and must work. They also indicated that the United Nations human rights machinery had a very limited capacity to deal with crisis situations.

37. He commended the High Commissioner for having visited 16 countries in all regions of the world over the past few months. He had thereby confirmed that he was fully able to perform one of his most important functions: to establish the diplomatic contacts needed to ensure respect for human rights.

38. The tangible results of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action were, however, not limited to the creation of that post. The simple fact that since the World Conference on Human Rights all United Nations agencies had started to evaluate the implications for human rights of all activities within their sphere of competence tended to prove the contrary. The attention now paid to the equality and fundamental rights of women was a further illustration of that trend.

39. One of the most important of the long-term results of the Vienna Conference was the proclamation of the United Nations decade for human rights education during the current session of the General Assembly. Full respect for an individual's fundamental rights could only be achieved within a culture of human rights that ensured respect for such rights on a daily basis and in a spontaneous atmosphere.

40. His delegation had therefore followed with interest the Working Group of the Third Committee established to provide practical follow-up to the recommendations contained in the Vienna Programme of Action. It appreciated the constructive efforts made by its Chairman to sum up the essence of the various suggestions made by different countries or groups of countries. However, it regretted the lack of progress made by the group at each of its sessions. While his delegation hoped that the Working Group would be able to adopt a draft resolution by consensus, it urged that States should not be discouraged if it failed to do so, since the Committee did not yet appear to have defined its goals in concrete terms.

41. He regretted that, of all the recommendations made at the Vienna Conference, the one concerning the strengthening of the Centre for Human Rights had not been properly followed-up. As the High Commissioner had observed, the scarcity of financial and human resources at the disposal of the Centre was such that only the quality and voluntary dedication of its staff had enabled it to cope with its growing workload. It was the responsibility of the States Members of the United Nations to resolve the problem.

42. For more than two years, in different forums, his country had been recommending that the United Nations should establish a comprehensive programme to support national projects aimed at strengthening institutions of the rule of

law. It appeared from the report submitted by the Secretary-General (A/49/512), that such a programme already existed, but that it lacked the means to provide the proposed assistance. He wondered whether the limitations of the international system for the promotion and protection of human rights were exactly the same as those which affected the United Nations system as a whole: its objectives and fields of action had outgrown its capacity and material resources. If that was the case, then perhaps the best solution, as far as human rights were concerned, would be the increased rationalization of the organs concerned, since it would be most regrettable if the international community had to lower its expectations any further.

43. Mr. SAHRAOUI (Algeria) said that Algeria welcomed the unanimity that had been achieved at the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna over the concept of the interdependence and indivisibility of human rights. In his view, one of the major achievements of the Conference had been to reassert, by consensus, the universal nature of the right to development. It was unfortunate, however, that for lack of concrete measures that right had still not been realized. He concurred with the conclusions of the Working Group on the Right to Development of the Commission on Human Rights, and deplored, in particular, the fact that a distinction was made within the system between the various categories of human rights and that, without a monitoring mechanism, no progress was possible towards the implementation of the right to development, an issue which remained the collective responsibility of the international community.

44. With those observations in mind, his delegation firmly supported the consultations currently being conducted by the High Commissioner for Human Rights with Heads of State or Government, the heads of the secretariats of the multilateral financial institutions and the specialized agencies and the representatives of intergovernmental or non-governmental organizations, regarding the impact of structural adjustment policies on the implementation of the right to development, and regarding the appropriate measures to be taken to find a durable solution to the debt crisis.

45. Algeria was aware that the promotion and protection of human rights and democratic principles were primarily the responsibility of Governments, and it assigned a prominent place to those rights and principles in its project for the construction of a modern State based on republican principles and on the alternation of political power. Accordingly, it had acceded, without reservations, to the international legal human rights instruments, including the optional protocols.

46. Support for universally recognized norms could not allow the propagation of doctrines incompatible with human rights and democratic values, and it was for that reason that the Government and society in Algeria opposed religious extremism and the terrorist violence that characterized it. The Government of Algeria was determined to continue the dialogue with all those parties for which violence was not an act of faith and which desired to devise a solution that met with a consensus and emanated from the Algerian people themselves; accordingly, it was endeavouring to protect the fundamental rights of its citizens and to put an end to the terrorist manifestation of religious extremism. Algeria thus

endorsed the view expressed by the international community at the Vienna Conference that acts of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations were activities aimed at the destruction of human rights, fundamental freedoms and democracy and that States should take the necessary steps to combat intolerance based on religion or belief and the violence that accompanied it.

47. His delegation expressed the hope that the major resolutions adopted in 1994 at meetings devoted to the human person would rapidly become a reality.

48. Mr. SLOKENBERGS (Latvia) said that the Vienna Conference on Human Rights had been an important milestone in the history of mankind as all the participating States had reaffirmed their determination to protect and to promote human rights. In that respect, it had been markedly different from the first International Conference, held at Tehran in 1968, at a time when the world had been divided into two hostile blocs.

49. In his view, the time had come to transform those commitments into action; responsibility for doing so lay not only with States, but with the international community as a whole. Latvia welcomed the creation of the post of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, whose mandate encompassed a broad range of functions closely interconnected with the work of United Nations human rights machinery. If the efforts of the Organization in that sphere were to be effective, it was essential to improve coordination and cooperation among all the elements of that machinery, particularly since resources were limited and the Organization was being entrusted with an increasing number of tasks. In the view of his delegation, the High Commissioner, the Centre for Human Rights and the other institutions would be hard put to discharge their tasks without the allocation of additional resources.

50. It was clear from the first report of the High Commissioner (A/49/36) that he had initiated a constructive dialogue with many countries, thus helping to promote cooperation and understanding within the international community. None the less, his delegation believed that it was first and foremost necessary for States to respect the commitment they had made to comply with the recommendations contained in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.

51. For its part, Latvia had endeavoured to establish and strengthen national human rights institutions and to draw up a national action plan in that sphere. The post of State Minister for Human Rights had been created within the Ministry of Justice. The post was, however, regarded as a temporary one, and one of the Minister's main tasks was to facilitate the establishment of an independent institution for the protection and promotion of human rights. In addition, a governmental working group on the protection of the rights of the individual had been established, in order to bring together key individuals dealing with human rights.

52. In response to a request by that working group, a high-level international mission, organized by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and comprising representatives of several international organizations, including the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and the Council of

Europe, had visited Latvia to assist in the development of a national programme for the protection and promotion of human rights. The Prime Minister of Latvia had presented the first public copy of the draft programme to the High Commissioner for Human Rights during the latter's visit to Latvia.

53. His delegation wished to stress the important role of various United Nations bodies, in particular UNDP, in the preparation of the programme. Their cooperation demonstrated the constructive role that advisory services and technical assistance could play in the process of strengthening democratic institutions. Latvia was prepared to share its knowledge and experience with all interested countries.

54. Mr. AL-DOURI (Iraq), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, deplored the fact that the United States delegation had mentioned the President of Iraq by name, contrary to diplomatic usage within the United Nations.

55. One might well wonder what principles and values were upheld by the United States, a country which was responsible for the massacre of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis in the course of its aggression against Iraq, and which, as he spoke, was responsible for the deaths of old people, women and children in Iraq.

56. The United States had alleged that the Government of Iraq stole food sent to the population, whereas in fact the system for the distribution of food rations in Iraq was perfectly equitable.

57. The assertion that no United States company was helping to design projects to drain the marshes was false, and his delegation offered to produce documents to prove the contrary. It was stretching the limits of credibility to claim that the United States was more concerned than Iraq itself to serve the interests of the Iraqi population. Such a claim was merely part of the aggressive United States campaign against Iraq, which had nevertheless complied with all the demands made in the resolutions of the Security Council.

58. Within the Security Council, it was the United States which opposed lifting the embargo against Iraq, thereby seeking to starve its population and deprive Iraq of its natural resources. Iraq could but hope that the world would one day shake off the hegemony of the United States and that the United Nations would implement the provisions of the Charter equitably and objectively.

59. The United States had stated that it advocated the establishment of an international commission to study the acts of genocide and war crimes committed in Iraq. But he wondered who but the United States was responsible for those crimes. It was the United States which had approved the resolution authorizing the bombardment of civilian targets, such as the Baghdad hospital, which had taken the lives of 400 women and children. It was the United States which was responsible for the massacre of Iraqi soldiers after Iraq had announced a cease-fire and had withdrawn from Kuwait. It was the United States, again, which had employed atomic weapons, a fact which had been proved and which Iraq had reported to the United Nations. It was the United States again which, in 1993,

had prevented the Kurds from signing an agreement with the central Government. Lastly, it was the United States which opposed the delivery of food, medicines and other products vital to the survival of the Iraqis.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.